

**Ecosystem Restoration Program  
FY 2000 Priority Workshop Summary  
August 31, 1999**

Ecosystem Roundtable members in attendance:

Gary Bobker	Jason Peltier
Dan Fults	Doug Wallace
Bill Gaines	Tom Zuckerman
Walt Hoye	

## **Meeting Purpose**

The purpose of this public workshop was to discuss the proposed revised process for project selection and FY 2000 priorities for the Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP). CALFED was specifically seeking input on the types of priorities and potential distribution of funds for FY 2000. Attached are the materials distributed at the workshop and two letters from Roundtable members who provided comments in writing.

## **Proposed Revised Project Selection Process**

The proposed revision to the project selection process is primarily driven by the transition to implementation of the long-term Ecosystem Restoration Plan. The revised process also addresses concerns raised by stakeholders and other individuals which include a need to be more transparent and to provide opportunities for the public to be involved early in the process. Project selections are expected to be conducted in a public forum.

Wendy Halverson Martin described the current thinking on how the process would work. First, priorities would be defined for the upcoming fiscal year. Priorities would be based on the implementation actions described in the ERP Stage 1 Actions and Stage 1A Bundles. Next, a solicitation would be held in the second quarter of each fiscal year. Once proposals are received, they will undergo technical and scientific review. That information will be forwarded to a subgroup of the Ecosystem Roundtable and continue through the decision-making process.

## **Comments on the Revised Process**

There was support for making the revised process more public. It was suggested that the process for directed programs also be very transparent. Much interest was expressed in maintaining a scientifically-based decision-making process.

**Project Selection.** A majority of the comments focused on the project solicitation and review step. It was suggested that a pre-proposal step be added into the process. Applicants could prepare a couple pages in response to the priorities, receive feedback and then develop a full proposal, if deemed appropriate.

In regard to project review, many people suggested incorporating a step which allows interaction

between reviewers and applicants for questions and answers. It was also suggested that a process be set up to allow the applicant to provide information on previously funded phases of projects. Several suggested implementing some type of "norming" process among the reviewers in an attempt to calibrate responses. Project proponents requested more constructive narrative information from the reviewers. Use of reviewers from across the country was encouraged.

Several commented on the need to maintain an integrative step in the review process where information is incorporated from other restoration programs (e.g. CVPIA) and where integration occurs among the CALFED programs.

## **FY2000 Priorities**

Wendy Halverson Martin outlined the draft Ecosystem Restoration Program priorities for FY2000. Those priorities are based on CALFED program priorities for FY 2000 and the ecosystem actions identified in Stage 1 and Stage 1A bundles.

**Priority setting/Importance of science.** It was noted that priority setting is a very important part of the decision making process and that most of the effort should be focused on this step. Several commented that priority setting must be science-based and should not lose focus on the species needs and stressors that have been identified. It was also suggested that FY2000 decisions be based on the 1999 priorities outlined in the last proposal solicitation.

**Stage 1A bundles.** For FY2000, concern was raised over the use of the bundles as the basis for the priorities. Some felt that the geographic breakout was not the most appropriate, and that the ERP program should focus on the areas which provide the highest ecological benefits. The benefits of using bundles were also noted and the relationship to the CALFED solution principles was identified.

**Connection with ERP.** Several emphasized the need to show a direct connection between the priority actions and ERP/Strategic Plan. The connection with CMARP and across CALFED programs was also raised. Clarification was provided of the Ecosystem Science Program identified in the priorities.

**Actions supported.** Within the FY2000 priorities, support was noted for continuing funding for previously funded projects, for the Non-Native Invasive Species Program, upper watershed actions, and for environmental water acquisition. The importance of being able to take advantage of time-sensitive opportunities was emphasized. The importance of the agricultural issues identified was also noted, not only from an economic aspect but also from a natural resources perspective. The Farm Bureau observed the value of local meetings and offered assistance in conducting meetings to inform locals about this process.

**FY2001 Priorities.** Priorities suggested for 2001 included the upper Sacramento River and tributaries and the San Francisco Bay area.